DROUGHT2008

September 2008

2009 Drought Actions

Following two critically dry years, 2009 has the potential to be one of the most severe drought years in California's recorded history. Water supplies in major reservoirs and many groundwater basins are already well below average. Court-ordered restrictions on water deliveries from the Delta have significantly reduced supplies from the state's two largest water systems. Climate change is reducing mountain snowpack – a critical source of natural water storage. Finally, California's population is growing rapidly, but our statewide water system has not kept pace.

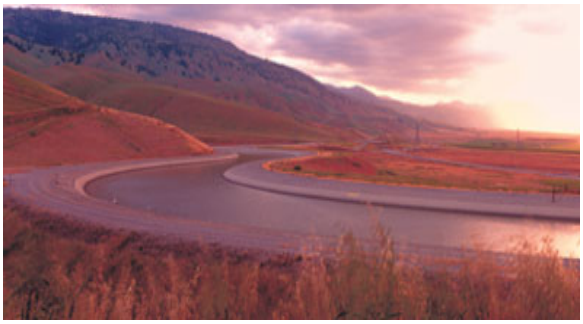
Governor Schwarzenegger has proposed a comprehensive water plan to address the long term water needs of the state. Earlier this summer, he issued an executive order to address the statewide drought and declared a drought emergency for much of the Central Valley. In response to the Governor's executive order, The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is implementing a number of actions now in preparation for a potentially dry 2009 and beyond.

Drought Water Bank

To help facilitate the exchange of water throughout the state, DWR has established a 2009 Drought Water Bank. To implement the 2009 Drought Water Bank DWR will purchase water from willing sellers primarily from water suppliers upstream of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. This water will be transferred using State Water Project (SWP) or Central Valley Project (CVP) facilities to water suppliers that are at risk of experiencing water shortages in 2009 due to drought conditions and that require supplemental water supplies to meet anticipated demands.

Water for public health and safety, agriculture, business and municipal use will be allocated differently, depending on water conditions in 2009. The drier the conditions, the more important it is to ensure there is water to protect the people and economy of the State of California. The rules for the water bank have been defined and the following steps are underway:

- Interested buyers are invited to sign up with the water bank by October 15, 2008
- Discussions have begun with willing sellers and prospective transfers are being developed
- Available transfer water will be validated to ensure no unreasonable adverse environmental or economic impacts
- Based on water conditions, water will be allocated to willing buyers and transferred in the summer of 2009



Water Conservation

While Californians have made great strides in water conservation and efficiency over the years, as the state's population has grown, so has our water consumption. Many communities in the state are now reaching the limits of their supply. Aggressive water conservation can help stretch available supplies to meet demands. As dry conditions continue, Californians will need to do more. Governor Schwarzenegger has called for Californians to reduce their per capita water consumption by 20 percent by the year 2020. DWR is aggressively moving forward with water conservation programs to help meet that goal. Some of the department's conservation efforts include:

- Encouraging increased widespread implementation of cost-effective conservation programs by urban and agricultural water suppliers
- Helping water agencies develop water shortage contingency plans so they are prepared for future dry conditions or supply interruptions
- Implementing programs to conserve water in landscaping and helping irrigation districts, farmers, and managers of large urban landscapes stretch their available water by providing daily information on plant water needs

Financial Assistance for Drought Programs

DWR will continue to provide financial assistance for drought programs, including special assistance and incentives to disadvantaged communities. In addition to the $17 million made available for drought assistance grants in August 2008, DWR will make additional drought assistance funding available in 2009. Senate Bill 1XX includes more than $200 million in Proposition 84 Integrated Regional Water Management funds that will be used to support drought and other water management programs. DWR also has $12 million available in low interest agricultural water conservation loans.

Additional funding for emergency drought mitigation (such as trucking of water or providing bottled water) will be available in 2009 from the Department of Public Health including: $9 million from Proposition 84 for emergency drought assistance to drinking water systems and approximately $84 million in a state revolving fund for drought relief and mitigation of water outages.

Technical Assistance for Small Water Systems and Private Well Owners

Small water systems and private well owners have historically experienced most of the water shortage emergencies during droughts. The majority of drought related problems experienced by small systems or private well owners result from dependence on unreliable water sources, commonly groundwater in fractured rock or small coastal terrace groundwater basins. Historically, particularly at-risk geographic areas include the foothills of the Sierra Nevada and Coast Ranges, inland Southern California, and the North and Central Coast regions. Most small systems and private wells are located in lightly populated rural areas where opportunities for interconnections with another system, water transfers or emergency relief are difficult.

DWR will conduct targeted outreach and provide technical assistance to those water agencies at greatest risk, including groundwater monitoring, leak detection, development of alternatives for emergency supplies and distribution of educational materials. DWR will partner with other state and local agencies to provide emergency assistance as conditions get drier.

Drought Education, Information and Outreach

Outreach and education are key components to dealing with California's drought. During this drought Californians will be called upon to reduce their water consumption. DWR will work in partnership with other state, federal and local agencies to help increase public education about the drought and ways for urban and agricultural users to conserve water.